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Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the fourth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), notably on efforts towards the achievement of a permanent ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon and a long-term solution based on the principles and elements outlined in paragraph 8 of the resolution. It provides a comprehensive assessment of the steps taken to implement resolution 1701 (2006) since my quarterly report issued on 14 March 2007 (S/2007/147).

2. The present report is being issued as we approach the first anniversary of the conflict that took place during the second quarter of 2006 between Hizbullah and Israel. On 12 July 2006, eight Israeli soldiers were killed and two soldiers, Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser, were abducted and are still being held by Hizbullah. The event precipitated Israeli military reprisals on the same day and Hizbullah rocket fire into northern Israel, igniting a conflict that ultimately led to the deaths of nearly 1,200 Lebanese and 160 Israelis, the destruction of much of Lebanon's infrastructure and severe damage to the economies of both countries. The present report highlights both continuing progress in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and areas of concern, which to date, have not led to the establishment of a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution as envisioned in the resolution. I am encouraged by the significant deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces and of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in the area south of the Litani River, both of whose activities aim to ensure that the area is free of any unauthorized armed personnel, assets and weapons and that there continue to be no positions other than those of the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL along the Blue Line. This constitutes a strengthening of the security arrangements aimed at preventing the resumption of hostilities in the area between the Blue Line and the Litani River. I am also pleased to report that there remains an enduring commitment by the Government of Lebanon and the Government of Israel to resolution 1701 (2006).

3. I am deeply concerned, however, that Lebanon remains in the midst of a debilitating political crisis and faces ongoing attacks aimed at destabilizing and undermining its sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence. During the reporting period, the country witnessed fighting between militants from the Fatah

al-Islam group and the Lebanese security forces, the worst internal fighting since its civil war, which lasted from 1995 to 1990; a series of bomb explosions in and around Beirut, the latest of which killed Walid Eido, a member of the Lebanese Parliament, and nine others on 13 June; and a bomb attack on 24 June against UNIFIL that killed six peacekeepers serving with the Spanish contingent. In addition, the firing of Katyusha rockets from southern Lebanon into northern Israel on 17 June by unknown elements was the most serious breach of the cessation of hostilities since the end of the war. Such incidents pose a direct challenge to both the new security arrangements in southern Lebanon and to the stability of the country as a whole.

4. Against this background, I am concerned that continued implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) may face recurring difficulties. Greater progress is necessary on key issues that are central to the achievement of a permanent ceasefire and a longer-term solution, such as the release of the abducted Israeli soldiers and of the Lebanese prisoners, the enforcement of the arms embargo, the halting of Israeli air violations of Lebanese sovereignty and the Shab'a Farms issue.

II. Attack against the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

5. As the present report was being finalized, on 24 June, a Spanish battalion patrol was hit by an explosion on the main road between the towns of Marjayoun and Khiam. The initial investigation confirmed that the explosion was caused by a car bomb. Six UNIFIL personnel serving with the Spanish contingent were killed, and two others were injured. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

6. The Lebanese political leadership, including Prime Minister Siniora, condemned the attack and expressed condolences to UNIFIL and to the Governments of the nations concerned. Hizbullah also denounced the attack, stating that it only hurt the people of Lebanon. The Government of Lebanon has established a high commission to investigate the attack and an investigation by UNIFIL is also under way.

7. I am deeply saddened and condemn in the strongest possible terms that terrorist attack against soldiers who had gone to Lebanon in the name of peace. I urge the Government of Lebanon to bring to justice those responsible as swiftly as possible.

8. In recent months, there have been a number of threats against UNIFIL from militant groups. UNIFIL has put in place a number of mitigation measures to ensure the safety and security of its military and civilian personnel and of its installations. It has reinforced its installations throughout its area of operations south of the Litani River and in Beirut and has implemented enhanced security procedures for all of its military and civilian personnel. Once the investigation into the 24 June attack is concluded, security arrangements will be further adjusted, if and as necessary, to mitigate the potential for such incidents in the future. At the same time, all measures will continue to ensure that mandated activities are conducted without hindrance, while taking due care of the prevailing security environment.

III. Implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

A. Respect for the Blue Line

9. The military and security situation in the UNIFIL area of operations has been generally stable since my report of 14 March 2007 (S/2007/147). However, in the most serious breach of the cessation of hostilities and violation of the Blue Line since the end of the conflict in 2006, three Katyusha rockets were launched from the area of El Aadeisse in south Lebanon on 17 June 2007. Despite very rudimentary launching mechanisms, two of the rockets landed in the Israeli town of Kiryat Shemona, causing minor damage but claiming no casualties. The attack was carried out by unidentified perpetrators. A group under the name Jihadi Badr Brigades-Lebanon branch claimed responsibility; however, its claim could not as yet be verified. Immediately after the attack occurred, Hizbullah denied any responsibility or knowledge of the attack and issued a press statement to that effect.

10. The Lebanese Armed Forces quickly deployed to the area, along with units from UNIFIL and deactivated a fourth rocket that had failed to fire. No suspects were found at the site.

11. Subsequent to the attack, the Lebanese Armed Forces deployed additional personnel in the area, established a number of new checkpoints and detained over 200 persons for investigation. UNIFIL has also increased its patrolling activities in the area, working in close coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces and the UNIFIL Force Commander and maintaining open lines of communication with the army senior commanders on both sides. The Prime Minister of Lebanon, the Speaker of the Parliament and the Lebanese Armed Forces promptly issued statements strongly condemning the attack.

12. UNIFIL was also in close contact with the Israel Defense Forces immediately after the incident occurred to urge Israel to exercise maximum restraint. Israel has so far refrained from taking retaliatory action.

13. I would like to commend the Lebanese Armed Forces, the Israel Defense Forces and UNIFIL for the way in which they handled the incident. It shows that, with appropriate coordination and liaison arrangements in place, it is possible to prevent such incidents from escalating. However, the fact that as yet unidentified elements were able to execute the attack from southern Lebanon is deeply troubling and underlines the need to further strengthen security arrangements, which are being put in place by the Lebanese Armed Forces, together with UNIFIL.

14. The situation along the Blue Line remains tense and fragile. On a number of occasions, the Israel Defense Forces and the Lebanese Armed Forces patrols have aimed weapons at each other across the Blue Line. In each instance, UNIFIL has acted promptly to dispatch a patrol to the scene to calm the situation and prevent confrontation. A number of ground violations by both sides have also raised tensions. On 28 May, the Israel Defense Forces violated the Blue Line by approximately 60 metres in the vicinity of United Nations position 4-31, with a tank and earthworks machinery. The Israel Defense Forces subsequently stated that the exact location of the Blue Line at the spot was unclear and that the violation had occurred inadvertently. A number of minor violations have also occurred on the Lebanese side, predominantly by shepherds and hunters. On two occasions, individuals who crossed the Blue Line were detained by the Israel Defense Forces

and released hours later. Inadvertent crossings are a particular concern in the Shab'a Farms region where there is rough terrain and no Israeli technical fence. The Force Commander of UNIFIL has urged both parties to act with restraint and refrain from activities that contribute to tension along the Blue Line.

15. The ground violations highlight the importance of visibly marking the Blue Line in sensitive areas, in particular where there is a considerable distance between the Blue Line and the Israeli technical fence. In my report dated 14 March, I noted that both parties had orally agreed to the UNIFIL proposal to mark the Blue Line. After further intensive discussions in tripartite meetings on the issue, the Government of Lebanon has officially accepted the UNIFIL proposed technical process for marking the Blue Line, while the Government of Israel has sought clarifications. I urge both parties to move forward expeditiously with UNIFIL on the proposal, which, if fully implemented on the ground, would build trust, decrease tension and significantly contribute towards a reduction in incidents and inadvertent violations of the Blue Line.

16. UNIFIL has reported a significant increase in Israeli air violations, through jet and unmanned aerial vehicle overflights of Lebanese territory. These violations occur on an almost daily basis, frequently numbering between 15 and 20 overflights, and even reaching 32, in a single day. The Government of Lebanon continues to protest the overflights as a serious violation of Lebanese sovereignty and of resolution 1701 (2006). The Government of Israel maintains that they are a necessary security measure that will continue until its two abducted soldiers are released and the measures set out in paragraphs 14 and 15 of resolution 1701 (2006) are implemented in full. Notwithstanding the essential requirement to fully implement all provisions of resolution 1701 (2006), Israeli overflights not only constitute repeated violations of that and other relevant Security Council resolutions; they also undermine the credibility of both UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces in the eyes of the local population and negatively affect efforts to stabilize the situation on the ground.

B. Security and liaison arrangements

17. The Force Commander of UNIFIL continues to hold regular tripartite meetings with senior representatives of the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces, in which critical security issues are addressed. Steady progress has been made on a number of key areas through this forum, which is essential to UNIFIL efforts to foster stability and prevent incidents across the Blue Line.

18. I am pleased to report that the liaison and coordination arrangements, referred to in my previous report, were accepted by both parties and came into force during the period under review, following written notification of acceptance from the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces. The arrangements stipulate that both the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces must ensure that an officer at the rank of General, or his deputy, can be contacted at all times by the UNIFIL Force Commander so that any incident can be quickly resolved before it escalates. As noted above, the benefits of having strong coordination and liaison arrangements became clear during the incident of 17 June, where the Force Commander was able to establish and maintain a continuous exchange with senior-level officers of the Israel Defense Forces and of the Lebanese Armed Forces.

UNIFIL is in the process of establishing a hotline between the Force Commander and his counterparts in the Lebanese Armed Forces and Israel Defense Forces.

19. The Israel Defense Forces remain in control of the northern part of Ghajar village, north of the Blue Line inside Lebanese territory, although they do not maintain a permanent military presence. Discussions on the issue of temporary security arrangements for northern Ghajar continue in tripartite meetings, and both parties indicate that they are committed to reaching an agreement with UNIFIL, which would facilitate Israeli withdrawal from the area. However, the duration of the temporary security arrangements still remains a point of contention. The UNIFIL Force Commander is actively engaged with both sides in an attempt to overcome the obstacle and finalize the arrangements. I am concerned that further delay in resolving the issue may contribute to increasing tensions along the Blue Line. It should be recalled that, as long as the Israel Defense Forces remains in northern Ghajar, Israel will have yet to complete its withdrawal from southern Lebanon in accordance with its obligations under resolution 1701 (2006).

20. The existing planning and coordination mechanism between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Army Command remains instrumental for coordinating activities on the ground. Collaboration between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces and Lebanese Navy has been further strengthened through coordinated exercises and training initiatives during the reporting period. Liaison officers of the Lebanese Armed Forces are detached in the UNIFIL headquarters Joint Operation Centre and Naval Operation Centre, in both sector headquarters and in all infantry battalions. While UNIFIL maintains two officers at the Israel Defense Forces Northern Command headquarters in Zefat, agreement has yet to be reached between the Government of Israel and the United Nations on establishing a civilian-led integrated UNIFIL liaison office in Tel Aviv.

21. The Lebanese Armed Forces maintain four infantry brigades south of the Litani River, operating 145 positions. Efforts are under way to increase and fortify the 47 Lebanese Armed Forces observation towers and positions along the Blue Line. The Lebanese Armed Forces monitor and control entry into the UNIFIL area of operations across the Litani River through permanent checkpoints and patrols. They have also requested UNIFIL assistance in building a military road parallel to the Blue Line in order to improve monitoring capabilities. Construction of that road is contingent upon the marking of the Blue Line.

22. UNIFIL continues to implement its mandate to assist the Lebanese Armed Forces in ensuring that the area between the Blue Line and the Litani River is free of unauthorized armed personnel, assets, weapons, infrastructure or related materiel. To that end, UNIFIL carries out more than 400 patrols per day throughout its area of operations, night surveillance on suspected activities by armed elements and operations in open areas. In addition, UNIFIL troops stop any individual if they have reason to suspect any activity in violation of resolution 1701 (2006).

23. Coordinated operations undertaken by the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL during the period under review have led to the discovery of abandoned arms, ammunition, explosive devices, bunkers and related infrastructure. The most significant discoveries were an ammunition dump and 17 rockets in the vicinity of El Fardeis, a cave with 100 mortar bombs in the vicinity of Mazraat Islamiye, two rocket launchers in Rchaf, a cave containing mines, mortars and detonators in the Kafr Shouba area and a weapons and ammunitions cache containing an anti-tank

recoilless gun with two rocket launchers and ammunition in the same general area. The Lebanese Armed Forces destroy or confiscate all arms and ammunition found south of the Litani River.

24. With the exception of two very disturbing incidents, which occurred at the end of the reporting period, namely, the 17 June rocket attack on Kiryat Shemona and the 24 June attack on UNIFIL, UNIFIL has neither discovered, nor received reports of, armed elements inside its area of operations, other than those within Palestinian refugee camps and local hunters. At the same time, the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL have not detected any illegal transfers of arms south of the Litani River. However, the two recent attacks, as well as the continuing weapons discoveries by UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces, clearly indicate that there are still weapons in the UNIFIL area of operations and persons prepared to use them. This underlines the importance of the activities of the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL to ensure that the area becomes free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons, which will require more time to achieve. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces have very strict security controls in place, including a significant number of positions, Lebanese Armed Forces checkpoints and UNIFIL road and open area patrols. In addition, as a consequence of the two attacks, the Lebanese Armed Forces are now taking additional security steps to address the situation in any suspected areas and UNIFIL will support their efforts.

25. The Government of Israel continues to claim that Hizbullah is rebuilding its military capacity primarily north but also south of the Litani River. UNIFIL, in collaboration with the Lebanese Armed Forces, stands ready to immediately investigate any such claims or alleged violations of resolution 1701 (2006) once the necessary specific information and evidence has been received. Hizbullah continues to have strong support among the local population and maintains a significant non-military presence. Suspected members have continued to closely monitor UNIFIL activities throughout the period under review, including through the taking of photographs and filming.

26. The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force, in collaboration with the Lebanese Navy, continues to enhance control of Lebanese territorial waters to prevent entry into Lebanon of unauthorized arms or related materiel by sea. Since my last report, the Maritime Task Force has hailed more than 3,000 ships. The identities of all vessels were checked and confirmed, and 25 suspicious vessels were inspected by Lebanese naval and customs officials on arrival in port. No attempts to smuggle weapons were reported. I am grateful to the Government of Germany for donating two naval vessels to the Lebanese Navy, which will represent a significant step in building its naval capacity and assisting Lebanon to assume increased responsibility for securing its sea boundaries.

27. I regret to report that there have been several occasions during the reporting period when actions by Israel Defense Forces personnel have endangered their own security and that of United Nations personnel. In an incident on 30 April, a fast patrol boat of the Israel Defense Forces approached a UNIFIL Maritime Task Force frigate at high speed and on a collision with the frigate and did not respond to the frigate's radio communication. The frigate was only able to avoid collision by rapidly and significantly reducing speed. On two other occasions, Israeli aircraft flew at low altitude over Maritime Task Force frigates in contravention of established procedures. In a meeting between the Maritime Task Force Commander

and his Israeli Navy counterpart, the Israel Defense Forces reassured UNIFIL that they would adhere to the operational arrangements between the Israel Defense Forces and the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force.

28. Relations between UNIFIL and the local population have continued to develop, especially through the work undertaken by the UNIFIL Civilian-military cooperation units and civil affairs teams. The implementation of quick-impact projects is proving to be a critical instrument for assisting local communities. The Force Commander has also initiated a series of meetings with community leaders throughout the UNIFIL area of operations, which have further helped to build trust and confidence as well as broaden the understanding of the UNIFIL mandate within local communities. Nevertheless, UNIFIL patrols have faced a number of isolated stone-throwing and other incidents, mainly by local youths. The Lebanese Armed Forces have taken a proactive role in preventing and addressing those incidents and in some cases have detained the perpetrators.

C. Disarming armed groups

29. A number of reports have indicated an increase in activities conducted by armed elements north of the Litani River, where the Lebanese authorities and the Lebanese Armed Forces have sole security responsibility. Suspected Hizbullah armed elements are alleged to be constructing new facilities in the Bekaa valley, including command and control centres and rocket launching capabilities, and conducting military training exercises. The reports have not been refuted by Hizbullah.

30. In identical letters dated 12 June from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to me and to the President of the Security Council (S/2007/348-A/61/953), the Government of Lebanon provided detailed information, collected by the Lebanese Armed Forces, on the activities of Palestinian armed elements and groups outside the Palestinian refugee camps based in Lebanon. A comprehensive update on the status of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias has also been provided in my most recent semi-annual report (S/2009/262) and in a briefing in June on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004).

31. Specifically, we have been informed by the Government of Lebanon that the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah-Intifada have reinforced their posts throughout the country following the attacks launched by Fatah al-Islam against the Lebanese Armed Forces in northern Lebanon. The information provides details of reinforcements of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command in areas such as Jubayla and Ain el-Bayda outposts, where about 100 members wearing military uniforms similar to those of the Lebanese Armed Forces have been deployed. In the Qussaya outpost, the group has installed eight rocket launchers (12- and 40-barrel) and directed them towards the Rayak airport. The information also outlines how Fatah-Intifada has reinforced its posts in Wadi al-Asswad, Balta, Helwa and Deir el-Achayer. Their number is estimated at about 500 men equipped with sophisticated weaponry, including rockets, mortars, anti-tank guns (106 mm recoilless gun and B10 gun) and anti-aircraft guns.

32. It is widely believed in Lebanon, including by the Government, that the strengthening of Fatah-Intifada outposts and those of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command could not have taken place without the tacit knowledge and support of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. The Prime Minister of Lebanon has recently stated publicly that the outposts have been reinforced with munitions, arms and fighters by the Syrian Arab Republic. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has denied such assertions as misleading. It should be noted that the Lebanese national dialogue involving all major Lebanese political parties, which was held in April and May 2006, agreed that Palestinian armed groups outside the Palestinian camps should be disarmed within six months. I expect the support of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic on that particular issue.

33. In addition, the Government of Lebanon provided us with information on the recent seizure of a truckload of Grad rockets, mortars and ammunition for automatic rifles and machine guns. The truckload, which belonged to Hizbullah, was seized on 5 June 2007 at a checkpoint of the Lebanese Armed Forces at Douriss near Baalbek in east Lebanon's Bekaa valley. According to the Government of Lebanon, the arms were being moved within the country. There seems to be an emerging consensus in Lebanon that the incident is similar to the one that took place on 8 February 2007, which was documented in my most recent report to the Council on implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2007/147).

34. The reports are disconcerting and a cause of great concern and constitute a clear violation of both the letter and spirit of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) as well as resolution 1559 (2004).

35. With reference to paragraph 10 of resolution 1701 (2006) and the issue of disarmament, I continue to believe that the disarmament of Hizbullah and other militia should be conducted through a Lebanese-led political process that will lead to the full restoration of the authority of the Government of Lebanon in all its territory so that there will be no weapons or authority other than its own.

36. The Government of Lebanon maintains that the question of Hizbullah arms and the arms of other militias remains open and in the centre of the political debate. However, no progress on the issue has been made. The ongoing political crisis continues to prevent the parties from discussing national dialogue issues or making progress on the Government's seven-point plan, which was adopted on 27 July 2006.

D. Arms embargo

37. Further to the update I have provided in relation to possible breaches of the arms embargo in my fifth semi-annual report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) (S/2007/262), I have received further disturbing information from the Government of Lebanon. The Government of Lebanon has informed me that on 6 June 2007, four truck carriers, each carrying two vehicles mounted with 40-barrel rocket launchers (a total of eight rocket-launchers) were seen by the Lebanese Armed Forces heading from Al-Kafeer in the Syrian Arab Republic across the Lebanese-Syrian border to Idriss Fortress and then on to an outpost of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command in Jabal al-Maaysara.

38. For its part, the Government of Israel continues to allege significant breaches of the arms embargo across the Lebanese-Syrian border, which it states, pose a serious strategic threat to the security of Israel and its citizens. It has claimed that the transfer of sophisticated weaponry by the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran across the Lebanese-Syrian border, including long-range rockets (with a range of 250 miles), anti-tank and anti-aircraft defence systems, occurs on a weekly basis, enabling Hizbullah to rearm to the same levels as before the past year's war or beyond. It has not provided any further specific evidence to back up those claims.

39. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has denied any involvement in effecting breaches of the arms embargo. In its identical letters to me and the President of the Security Council dated 4 May 2007, it provided a table listing weapons and ammunition smuggled into the Syrian Arab Republic from Lebanon, which have been confiscated by the Syrian security forces during the period from 26 April 2005, the date of the withdrawal of the Syrian army from Lebanon, to 4 May 2007. Through its identical letters to me and the President of the Security Council dated 11 May 2007, and subsequently, the Syrian authorities have informed me of their support for the meetings of the regional governors on either side of the Lebanese-Syrian border to agree to measures to halt smuggling and unauthorized movements across the border. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has informed us that it has recently requested technical border assistance from European Governments including the provision of equipment for the border and the training of Syrian border guards.

40. The Government of Lebanon has stated to me that it has a vital interest in controlling its borders to prevent the smuggling of arms, munitions and personnel into its territory. It has repeated its request that any information about illegal smuggling of arms or persons in the possession of any third country be shared with the Government of Lebanon directly, if possible, or, alternatively, through the United Nations. It has informed me that the Lebanese Armed Forces have maintained their positions along its border with the Syrian Arab Republic. In addition, the Government of Lebanon has informed me that the various security crises throughout the reporting period have placed a huge strain on the Lebanese Armed Forces, which have now been called upon to perform such various but critical tasks as fighting militants in the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp; internal security; traditional territorial defence; and anti-smuggling activities. In that context, the Government of Lebanon has made it clear that the control of its northern and eastern borders is a responsibility shared both by the Syrian Arab Republic and by Lebanon, in accordance with paragraph 15 of resolution 1701 (2006).

41. Pursuant to the statement of the President of the Security Council of 17 April 2007, in which the President encouraged me to establish an independent team to fully assess the monitoring of the Lebanese-Syrian border and to report thereon before submission of the present report, I am pleased that the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team has completed its work and has now submitted its report. In my view, this is a crucial report, which provides a professional and detailed technical evaluation of the difficult situation along the entire Lebanese-Syrian border. I note in particular the recommendations to improve, urgently and in the longer term, Lebanese capacities to secure the border regime along Lebanon's border with the Syrian Arab Republic. The report clearly shows that, in addition to

the valuable assistance being provided by the German pilot project along the northern border and the proposals for Lebanese integrated border management, further international assistance is urgently required to enhance Lebanese capabilities and to ensure that there are no breaches of the arms embargo.

E. Land mines and cluster bombs

42. In southern Lebanon, clean-up of the estimated 1 million unexploded cluster munitions continues. Since my previous report to the Security Council, an additional 50 new cluster bomblet strike locations have been identified by the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre-South Lebanon. As of 31 May 2007, 904 cluster bomblet strike locations have been recorded, contaminating an area of up to 36.6 million square metres.

43. As a result of the joint efforts of the Lebanese Armed Forces, 22 UNIFIL teams and 75 United Nations contracted and bilaterally funded clearance teams operating under the coordination of the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre-South Lebanon, 28 per cent of the surface and 15 per cent of the subsurface of the 36.6 million square metres have been cleared, and 117,872 of an estimated 1 million unexploded cluster munitions have been neutralized.

44. While there has been a decrease in the number of casualty figures in recent months, there have been 22 additional incidents among civilians since my previous report, with one person killed and 21 injured. Since the cessation of hostilities came into effect, a total of 203 civilians have been injured (180) or killed (23) as a result of cluster munitions. I regret to have to report that, despite a number of attempts by United Nations senior officials to obtain information regarding the firing data of cluster munitions utilized during the conflict in the second quarter of 2006, Israel has yet to provide that critical data. I call on the Government of Israel once again to provide the information to the United Nations.

F. Abducted soldiers and prisoners

45. Despite major efforts of the facilitator and the flexibility of Israel beyond the framework of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), implementation of the humanitarian aspects of the resolution has not yet been possible.

46. Controversial issues raised by Hizbullah require sustained and complicated efforts for reaching a solution. Progress is therefore slow, but continues. The situation unfortunately is aggravated by Hizbullah's persistent refusal to provide proof that the two soldiers are alive. Worries are thus increasing about their fate. I share deeply the anxiety of the families and call again on Hizbullah to reconsider this posture, which contradicts basic humanitarian values.

47. Despite difficulties, both sides request further United Nations facilitation efforts in order to overcome the remaining obstacles. In that regard, Hizbullah expressed its hope that a compromise be found prior to the next report to the Security Council to be submitted in September 2007. Israel is still ready to show flexibility with regard to the Lebanese prisoners. Against this background, I still hope that a solution can be found soon on the basis of moderation and of strict restraint in demands, in compliance with resolution 1701 (2006).

G. Delineation of borders

48. My representatives and I have continued to stress to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Government of Lebanon the importance of the final determination of their common borders for peaceful coexistence and good neighbourliness. Bilateral agreement on the borders would present a permanent solution to the issue of delineating Lebanon's international boundaries with the Syrian Arab Republic in fulfilment of resolutions 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has insisted, as stated in more detail in my semi-annual reports on the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004), that the demarcation of the borders is a bilateral matter. However, no movement has been reported by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic on reactivating the Lebanese-Syrian border committee, suggested by President Assad at his most recent meeting with me on 24 April 2007.

49. Specifically, as regards the Shab'a Farms, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, while agreeing with the Lebanese position in maintaining that the Shab'a Farms are Lebanese, has conveyed to me its view that a resolution of the issue would be possible only after a peace treaty with Israel has been concluded. I would encourage the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to reconsider this policy, which is in contradiction of resolutions 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). At the same time, I continue to investigate the cartographic, legal and political implications of the alternative path suggested by the Government of Lebanon in its seven-point plan, namely placing the Shab'a Farms under United Nations jurisdiction until a boundary is permanently delineated.

50. I am pleased to report that, based on the best available information, the senior cartographer has made solid progress towards a provisional determination of the geographical extent of the Shab'a Farms area. The Government of Lebanon has submitted to us new and useful material. I hope the Council will understand the subsequent need to discuss the cartographer's findings with the relevant parties. Israel has indicated its willingness to agree to my request to enable the cartographer to visit the area in the next few weeks. I look forward to delivering a detailed report on the conclusions of his work and on our discussions with the relevant parties, including with the Government of Israel, the Government of Lebanon and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, in my next report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

IV. Deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

51. Since my previous report, UNIFIL strength has increased as planned. The total number of military personnel, as of 19 June 2007, now stands at 13,313. That number includes 11,113 UNIFIL ground troops deployed in two sectors, with headquarters in Tibnin and Marjayoun, and 2,000 personnel serving in the Maritime Task Force, in addition to 179 staff officers at UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura and 21 national support elements. UNIFIL is assisted in its tasks by 51 military observers of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization. Twenty-nine staff officers serve with the Strategic Military Cell based at United Nations Headquarters. With the planned deployment of approximately 340 troops from the Republic of

Korea in July, UNIFIL strength will reach approximately 13,700 military personnel from 30 troop-contributing countries. UNIFIL troops have reached a high level of operational readiness, which allows them to react promptly to incidents throughout its area of operations. The civilian component has also continued to strengthen across all components of the mission. As of 5 June 2007, UNIFIL civilian staff strength totalled 706 (254 international and 452 national staff).

52. The mission is carrying out an expansion and refurbishment programme of its Naqoura headquarters to ensure adequate facilities for all personnel, in full compliance with minimum operating security standard requirements. UNIFIL will also refurbish the Naqoura port that borders UNIFIL headquarters to provide improved maritime access to UNIFIL, resulting in better security for UNIFIL in a crisis situation, and to support the Lebanese Armed Forces and local civilian maritime activities.

V. Observations

53. Almost one year has passed since hostilities erupted in southern Lebanon in July 2006. The swift and effective deployment of a significantly expanded peacekeeping force has helped to establish a new strategic military and security environment in southern Lebanon. I am grateful to the 30 troop-contributing countries that make up the new UNIFIL. The speed with which they responded to resolution 1701 (2006) and the activities that their troops undertake on a daily basis have been critical in preventing a recurrence of hostilities across the Blue Line. At the same time, we must recognize the immense and historic contribution of the Lebanese Armed Forces in helping to stabilize the situation in southern Lebanon. Over the past 10 months, the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL have developed a partnership that has achieved a number of key objectives contained in the resolution and has helped to maintain the cessation of hostilities.

54. The 17 June rocket attack from southern Lebanon against Israel constitutes a serious breach of the cessation of hostilities. The attack did not come entirely as a surprise since hostile groups have publicly voiced their opposition to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). In order to address the threat, it is important that all parties maintain their strong commitment and continue to show determination to respect the cessation of hostilities agreement and implement all provisions of the resolution.

55. As I have done in previous reports, I urge the international community to provide relevant, timely and necessary bilateral assistance and support to the Lebanese Armed Forces to help it implement its obligations under resolution 1701 (2006). For the Government of Lebanon to extend its authority and exercise full sovereignty, it is crucial that it has credible and legitimate armed forces capable of ensuring security and stability over all its territory. There is a risk that the current fighting in Nahr Al-Bared refugee camp and the volatile situation in other camps may lead to additional shortages of resources and could negatively affect the ability of the Lebanese Armed Forces to carry out its obligations under resolution 1701 (2006). While appreciating the considerable difficulties faced by the Lebanese Armed Forces at the current time, I appreciate the Government's pledge to maintain the army's high visibility and close coordination with UNIFIL in southern Lebanon.

The rocket attack on 17 June and the attack against UNIFIL one week later only serve to underline the importance of maintaining the highest degree of vigilance.

56. I also appreciate the support of the Government of Israel and of the Israel Defense Forces for UNIFIL. In this connection, I note especially the words of appreciation expressed to me and other United Nations personnel by a number of senior Israeli political and military officials, and their acknowledgement of the new strategic realities created by the deployment of UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces in southern Lebanon. I welcome the decision of the Government of Israel not to retaliate following the rocket attack on 17 June. I regret, however, that the Israel Defense Forces continue with almost daily flights over Lebanese territory and, once again, I call upon the Government of Israel to cease the air violations.

57. With reference to paragraph 6 of resolution 1701 (2006), I am pleased to report that the international community has continued to provide assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon. Through the conference held in Stockholm, which focused on emergency assistance and rehabilitation, and more recently, through the Paris III process, Lebanon has received substantial international financial support. However, updated information related to donor commitments and disbursement figures highlight the importance for all donors to fulfil their pledges of financial assistance and reconstruction programmes.

58. As noted above, as well as in previous reports, Israel has yet to provide detailed firing data that would give the exact location, quantity and type of cluster munitions utilized during the conflict in the second quarter of 2006. The provision of such information to UNIFIL would greatly assist the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre in its efforts to clean up the estimated 1 million unexploded cluster munitions. While the Lebanese Armed Forces, the United Nations and the bilaterally funded teams are making progress, it will take until 2008 to clear the estimated 36.6 million square metres contaminated by the cluster munitions. Continuing deaths and injuries to Lebanese civilians caused by those munitions, not to mention the loss of agricultural production in affected areas, only increases the local population's antagonism towards Israel. I again urge Israel to provide detailed data on its use of cluster munitions to the United Nations as soon as possible.

59. I am disturbed by the persistent reports pointing to breaches of the arms embargo along the Lebanese-Syrian border. Such reports constitute a major impediment to the establishment of the permanent ceasefire and long-term solution envisaged in resolution 1701 (2006). While a complete sealing of the border may not be possible, I am concerned that the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team concludes in its report that the Lebanese-Syrian border is not sufficiently secure and that Lebanese capabilities are lacking. I also note the observation contained in the report that the potential already exists to significantly improve the border security regime and that the Government of Lebanon could do more with existing capabilities. I would recommend that the Government of Lebanon implement the findings of the report in full. Further to the recommendations of the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team, I would again call upon Member States and relevant regional organizations to provide the urgently needed technical assistance, training and equipment that the Government of Lebanon requires to strengthen the border security regime along its border with the Syrian Arab Republic, and to ensure the full implementation of paragraph 15 of resolution 1701 (2006), including the arms embargo.

60. The Syrian Arab Republic, other regional States and the Islamic Republic of Iran have a particular responsibility to ensure that the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006) related to the arms embargo are fully respected. The Syrian Arab Republic, in particular, has a shared responsibility in controlling its borders with Lebanon and in implementing paragraph 15 of resolution 1701 (2006), including in safeguarding against breaches of the arms embargo. In this regard, I urge the Syrian Arab Republic to do more to control its border with Lebanon and I look forward to specific proposals from the Syrian authorities in time for the next quarterly report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), which is due in September. I have taken note of the Syrian Arab Republic's expressed willingness to consider working with European Governments on improving border security. I welcome this development. I also welcome and would encourage, as suggested by the Government of Lebanon, the establishment of a mechanism also including the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the European Union or the United Nations, which would aim to improve technical facilities and arrangements along Lebanon's border with the Syrian Arab Republic.

61. As I stated in my previous report, border delineation, including in the Shab'a Farms area, remains a key issue in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). In that regard, I am disappointed that no further progress has been made between the Government of Lebanon and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in determining their common borders. I call again on the Syrian Arab Republic to take the necessary steps with Lebanon to delineate their common border in accordance with resolutions 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). It should be recognized that joint Lebanese-Syrian boundary committees demonstrated good collaboration and agreement on boundary procedures during the 1960s. It is suggested that with the assistance of the United Nations a joint boundary commission could be re-established.

62. I would like to commend the senior cartographer on his work, to date, on developing an accurate territorial definition of the Shab'a Farms area. I believe the provisional determination of the geographical extent of the Shab'a Farms area based on the best information available, provides a good basis on which to move the issue forward. I would note the cooperation that the Government of Lebanon has given to the senior cartographer in his work and would urge Member States, in particular the Syrian Arab Republic, to provide any relevant documentation in their possession and other assistance. In this regard, I am pleased that the Government of Israel has agreed to a visit by the senior cartographer to the Shab'a Farms area. I am hopeful that further discussions on the area, including on its territorial definition, with the Governments of Israel, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic will strengthen a diplomatic process aimed at resolving this key issue in accordance with the relevant provisions of resolution 1701 (2006). Progress on the issue, however, cannot be separated from the principles and elements required for the permanent ceasefire and long-term solution identified in resolution 1701 (2006).

63. I am concerned by the activities of armed elements and groups and the challenges they pose for the stability and independence of Lebanon and for the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). The appalling attack on 24 June against UNIFIL is only the latest example of the threat that they pose. I am very concerned for the safety and security of all United Nations personnel based in Lebanon. Further assistance to the Government of Lebanon and its security forces is required to ensure that, as stated in its seven-point plan, it can extend its authority over its

territory through its legitimate armed forces and that there are no weapons or authority other than that of the Government of Lebanon.

64. As we move towards the one-year anniversary of the hostilities that erupted in 2006, I regret that we have not been able to arrive at a permanent ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon. I also regret that further progress has not been made in obtaining the release of the abducted Israeli soldiers and on such issues as halting Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace. However, I am hopeful that a long-term solution can be found, in particular, if we further consolidate the strategic change that has occurred in southern Lebanon; strengthen the security regime along Lebanon's border with the Syrian Arab Republic; and make further progress on the issue of Shab'a Farms. Above all, I would call on Lebanon, Israel and key States such as the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as the international community, to support the implementation of all aspects of resolution 1701 (2006). At a time of heightened regional instability and tension, resolution 1701 (2006) remains a vital element in helping to settle issues of critical importance to international peace and security. We must not lessen our commitment to implementing the resolution fully. At the same time, we must remain committed to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region.

65. As the Security Council is aware, the UNIFIL mandate will expire on 31 August 2007. On 25 June, the Lebanese Council of Ministers requested the renewal of the mandate. On the same day, during my meeting with Prime Minister Siniora in Paris, I received a letter requesting the Council to extend the mandate for a further period of one year, without amendment. In that regard, I intend to submit a letter to the Council during the month of August requesting that it consider the renewal of the mandate.

66. In concluding, I want to pay tribute to all United Nations military and civilian personnel serving in these difficult circumstances in Lebanon. I want to express my heartfelt condolences to the Government of Spain and the families of the six peacekeepers killed in the past weekend. I would add that the terrorist attack against UNIFIL will not deter the United Nations from carrying out its Security Council-mandated activities. Rather, it redoubles our commitment to ensuring that resolution 1701 (2006) is fully implemented by all parties and that the larger United Nations goals of peace, stability and justice in the Middle East are achieved. In this regard, it will be critical at the current time to maintain the full capacities of UNIFIL in order to preserve stability in its area of operations south of the Litani River.